

**Author: John E. Fetzer**

**Date: 1927-05-22**

**Category: JEF Speeches and Articles**

22-May-1927

**“Faith of our Fathers”**

These faces, glowing with sympathy and joy from the impulses of a common gratitude, make a profound and lasting impression on our hearts. The time, the place, and the purpose of this occasion, together with your sympathy and joy, are reflected from you, my friends, to this class of 1927. The responsibility, incited by this reflection, looms before us like an Alpine peak. We realize that we have reached the transition point in life. Heretofore, we have been living lives of an artificial character, shielded by our dear schoolmasters of Emmanuel Missionary College. But we have now come face to face with the task which every man and woman on this platform owes the world, that of facing a life which must be marked by noble achievement. In the years that we have dwelt in these college halls, we have been taught to aim high. But it is the contention of this class, that even though one may aim high, he will meet with utter failure, unless he takes with him, as an impetus to this noble achievement, the faith which has dominated the lives of honorable men and women the world around. And as a consequence, this class has chosen for its guide, henceforth, that all inspiring motto, “Faith of our Fathers.”

A successful life is impossible without this faith. In fact, says one, “Man not only deals with a past which he may know, and a present which he may see, but a future in

## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Page 2

whose possibilities he must believe.” Dr. Grenfel, like our fathers, saw a future in whose possibilities he believed. Just graduating from Cambridge, he stood at the forks of the road. Down one road there beckoned a medical practice among the prominent families of England. It was an alluring prospect. Down the other road in the shadowy distance, there was the outstretched hands of the neglected fisher-folk of the long Labrador coast.

Which would we, as seniors, have chosen?

Grenfel turned his back on England’s great and chose the path of service on the stormbound, rocky Labrador coast. And as a result, Grenfel is known the world around for his sacrificial service and for the good he has accomplished. Grenfel had faith; he had confidence to believe that he could accomplish a certain work, and he did accomplish that work.

Someone has said, “There are plenty of people in the world to do the thing that can be done, but the thing that cannot be done, only faith can do it.”

People told Columbus it couldn’t be done, but in the face of threats, ridicule, storms, and mutiny of sailors, faith conquered. It was faith that enabled the Puritans to launch into an unknown and stormy sea. It was faith that enabled Franklin to dine on a small loaf in the printing office with a book in his hand. It was faith that sustained Lincoln and Garfield on their long journeys from the log cabin to the White House. One of the most assuring stories of faith is that of the twelve spies who were sent to look over the land of Palestine before the people of Israel “went up to possess it.” Ten spies saw giants and walled cities and gave it up; two spies saw the same giants and walled cities, but they said, “We can do it.” They had faith to win and did win. It takes faith to win. We as seniors, who find ourselves at the crossroads of life, need this faith to win. Because, in the days to come we

## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Page 3

are going to find ourselves, not at mere crossroads, but at the intersection of a multiplicity of highways. We may see down one road in the darkened distance, the Labrador coast; we may recognize down another threat, ridicule, the mutiny of sailors; not knowing which way to turn, we may spy giants and walled cities. Yes, in our long journey from a "Log Cabin" college, as it were, to the "white house" in the new earth, there is just one thing that can conquer adverse forces, and that is the faith of our fathers.

But these faithful men of the past had more than just a superficial self-confidence; they had more than just mere faith in their own ability to achieve noble things. They had a faith which was social and universal, not entirely exclusive. They had confidence in the faith of others, and likewise their coworkers and companions placed their trust in the faith manifested by our fathers. So strong was their faith in one another that even life itself was not too great a price to pay in order to sustain it. If our fathers in their lives of high attainment found such faith as this, what ought we as seniors to lay down as a cardinal principle for our lives? The answer is obvious. If we expect to succeed in the cause of God, it means that we must have faith in our fellow workers, from the highest in authority to the lowest in the rank and file. It means that we must permit this faith of which we have been talking, not only to permeate our lives, but it must be a magnetic influence for good, upon every life with which we come in contact. A great man of faith has said, "No man builds or keeps his faith alone." And how true it is. I have my doubts if there would be eighty-five graduates on this platform tonight, were it not for the fact that someone had faith in the members of this class. My mind goes back to the one to whom we must pay tribute, for the highest and purest type of faith that humankind can bestow upon humankind, - Mother. The very word is expressive of that noble, that excelling faith which has meant so much to us. If we seniors will stop to reflect, we shall recall that many times during our sojourn

## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Page 4

here, it seemed as if the clouds of darkness would banish noble achievement from our doors forever. But then, like a ray of sunshine, coming through the window, the exalted faith of mother would penetrate our souls and again faith would illuminate our lives and we would press toward the mark.

How to maintain this buoyancy in the midst of life's stress and pain is not a process of reason, it is the undeniable triumph of faith. It is,

“The virtue to exist by faith

As soldiers live by courage.”

Such was the faith of our fathers. Every noble achievement they made was measured by simple faith, child-like faith, which brought an inward satisfaction of triumph to the soul. It wasn't measured by land, money, popularity or even influence. It wasn't measured by just mere faith in their own ability, or by a social and universal faith alone. It was more than that. It was measured by the greatest faith ever given to man – faith in an all-seeing, all-powerful God. That faith is not dead today. It is living like the creative inspiration received from the ever-living works of art. Ask the hundreds of thousands who have gazed with rapt souls on the immortal works of Michael Angelo at Rome, and they will tell you that Michael Angelo still lives—that he is still entralling the hearts of men on the margins of many seas. Picture, my friends, if you can, Egypt without a Moses, a Babylon without a Daniel, England without a Milton or Gladstone, or even America without a Washington or Lincoln. We can't fathom such a thing. Neither can we picture the cause of God without that faith which animated its founding fathers. It is living yet today. It is living in the hearts of the fathers of tomorrow. Indeed, it lives in this class. I cannot deny my vision of faith. I see members of this, the largest class, down in the heart of Africa,

blazing the trails as did David Livingstone; I see others like Martin Luther who will not be afraid to nail the 95 theses to the church door; I see some like the apostle Paul standing before Agrippa, and others like Wesley leading the multitudes. Yes, I see these men and women encircling the earth -men and women who will say, "Father of our fathers! Holy faith! We will be true to thee till death!"